



Assistive Technology and Augmentative Assistive Communication Support for Schools 2017 Request for Applications

Tennessee Department of Education | **September 2017**

Application Due Date: October 27, 2017

Funding for this program is provided by the U.S. Department of Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Table of Contents

[General Information](#)

[Review Process](#)

[Application Procedures](#)

[Application Components](#)

[Appendix A: Scoring Rubric](#)

[Appendix B: Budget Template](#)

[Appendix C: Allowable Costs](#)

General Information

Background

Communication is the key to active participation in learning, sharing of ideas, expressing opinions, and creating relationships with others. For most students, this is a skill naturally acquired. For some students with a disability, communication continues to be a challenge and interferes with their ability to share their knowledge, abilities, and create strong friendships. Students have complex needs that often require ingenuity, technology or adaptive equipment, alternative augmentative communication, direct instruction, meaningful context for practice, and continued support. Each student is unique and there are still many students in Tennessee for whom the school team is seeking a system that will enable the student to begin to communicate or communicate beyond simple needs. To further exacerbate the situation, the equipment and supports needed are often complicated, expensive, or unknown by the school team due to the rare use of the device.

The department seeks to support educators and schools in providing evaluations, services, equipment, and training on communication systems designed for students with complex needs. In the past, it was difficult to determine which schools were seeking support. The Multi-State Alternate Assessment (MSAA) is the new state alternate assessment for English language arts and math. As a part of the assessment design, the test administrator/educator will complete a learner characteristics inventory (LCI). Additionally, for students who currently do not have a reliable form of communication, a Student Response Check (SRC) is used to end the assessment. The department has access to the LCI and SRC data, which will be used to provide the targeted support outlined in the awarded grants.

Procurement Purpose

The department is seeking up to four qualified grantees to support students' assistive technology and augmentative assistive communication (AT-AAC) needs in school districts and schools within two core regions, selected from the following:

- Northwest
- Southwest
- Mid-Cumberland
- South Central
- Upper Cumberland
- Southeast
- East Tennessee
- First Tennessee

The awarded grantees will be charged to support educators and schools in developing a communication system for any student currently not communicating beyond basic needs, including the following:

- Building capacity in the evaluation, development, training, instruction, and progress monitoring required to develop and design communication systems for students with complex communication needs to communicate and self-advocate to peers and within the community.
- Sustainability beyond the project
 - This will include the development of local professional learning communities (PLCs) composed of educators, speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), and other identified specialists within the schools in that area.

The outline for the project, including timeline and expectations is as follows:

Year One

During year one, the grantees will focus on developing materials, trainings, tools, etc. through working collaboratively with schools. To capitalize on student data from the MSAA, the department will determine the proportion or percentage of students who were not able to participate in the alternate assessment due to complex communication needs as determined by SRC data. The schools with the highest proportion or percentage within each core region will be the target schools for this years. As the grantees and educators work together to develop and design communication systems, training for additional staff/peers/family, progress monitoring tools, etc., the grantees will build a model for this work moving forward in years two–five. Additionally, the educators at the identified target schools will be required to facilitate PLCs in collaboration with the grantees to assist in building sustainability.

Goals:

- Develop working relationships with target schools
- Begin a “lending library”, virtual and/or physical, for the sharing of materials, communication devices, communication boards, teaching activities, webinars, data collection tools, video supports, etc.
- Develop training and support materials related to:
 - AT-AAC evaluation
 - Communication system development
 - Training for parents/teachers/staff within the building who will work with the student
 - Training for peers
 - Progress monitoring
 - Adding complexity and/or new vocabulary
 - Facilitating a regional PLC

Years Two–Four

During years two–four, the grantees will increase the number of schools they are supporting and continue to build a library of materials, trainings, tools, etc. The target schools will continue to be driven by the percentage or proportion of students as indicated by the annual SRC data from the MSAA. Additionally, the educators at all target schools will be required to facilitate PLCs in collaboration with the grantees.

Goals

- Develop working relationships with the new target schools identified through the SRC data
- Continued monitoring of “lending library” virtual and/or physical for the sharing of materials, communication devices, communication boards, teaching activities, webinars, data collection tools, video supports, etc. including the acquisition of new devices and repairs/reprogramming.
- Continue developing training and support materials related to:
 - AT-AAC evaluation
 - Communication system development
 - Training for parents/educators/staff within the building who will work with the student
 - Training for peers
 - Progress monitoring
 - Adding complexity and/or new vocabulary
 - Facilitating regional PLC

Year Five

Year five will focus on sustainability. The five-year grant should result in increased understanding and capacity within the schools on the evaluation, development, training, implementation, and progress monitoring required for student communication development. The grantees’ contracts will include deliverables to increase the number of schools they are supporting and continue to build a library of materials, trainings, tools, etc. through the work within the schools, along with developing a system for continued work within the region as well as at the school level. Additionally, the educators should be facilitating the PLCs thereby building sustainability, collaboration, and sharing of resources.

Goals

- Build sustainability through PLCs and support to schools
- Continue “lending library” virtual and/or physical for the sharing of materials, communication devices, communication boards, teaching activities, webinars, data collection tools, video supports, etc.
- Continue training and providing support materials related to the following while keeping abreast of current technology and research:
 - AT-AAC evaluation
 - Communication system development

- Training for parents/teachers/staff within the building who will work with the student
 - Training for peers
 - Progress monitoring
 - Adding complexity and/or new vocabulary
- Support educators in facilitating regional PLC

Other responsibilities include, participating in regular monthly collaboration with all awarded grantees, quarterly meetings with the department's principle investigator, proposing a collaborative presentation (with the other awarded grantees) at the Partners in Education (PIE) conference, managing an exhibitor table at PIE with the other awarded grantees, and maintaining a state-wide lending library of AT-AAC devices and materials.

Each awarded grant will have a term of up to five years with a maximum liability of \$520,000 (\$104,000 per year).

Communications

Prospective grantees must direct communications concerning this request for applications to the following person designated as the solicitation coordinator:

Kristen McKeever, director of division operations
 Division of Special Populations and Student Support
 Department of Education
 710 James Robertson Parkway
 Andrew Johnson Tower, 11th Floor
 Nashville, TN 37243
 (615) 741-0572
Kristen.B.McKeever@tn.gov

Review Process

All complete application packages meeting the requirements and received by the department on or before the application deadline will be forwarded to a peer review committee. The committee will provide each application with a technical merit score based upon the review criteria and rubric. A copy of the scoring rubric can be found in [Appendix A](#). Technical merit scores will serve as the foundation for grant award decisions.

The department reserves the right to not award all grants, and to negotiate specific grant amounts. **All awards are subject to the availability of federal funds. Grants are not final until the grant contract is executed.**

Application Procedures

The application must be completed and submitted via email to Kristen.B.McKeever@tn.gov by **October 27, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. central. Paper copies of this application will not be accepted.**

Steps to submitting an application:

1. Complete all sections of the application.
2. Submit the application for approval within your agency – grant director approval, fiscal director approval, and agency director approval.
3. Sign completed application (electronic signature is acceptable).

Application Components

Sustainability (10 Points)

Applicants are asked to describe the process for continuing the project after grant funding is no longer available. The sustainability plan should be detailed. General statements about seeking other grants is insufficient. The applicant should discuss how other funds will be leveraged to continue the program and how partnerships can be utilized to defray some program expenses in the future. Any use of operating funds to finance the project should also be mentioned.

Technical Response (60 Points)

The applicant must address all items below and provide, in sequence, the information and documentation as required.

1. Provide a narrative that illustrates your understanding of the department's requirements and project schedule.
2. Describe how you will complete the scope of services, accomplish required objectives, and meet the department's project schedule.
3. Provide a plan that outlines how you will manage the project, ensure completion of the scope of services, and accomplish required objectives within the department's project schedule.
4. Outline your expertise and prior experience training and supporting student communication acquisition.
5. Provide your plan to create a supportive and collaborative relationship with educators, schools, and districts as well as parents and paraprofessionals.
6. Describe your ability to facilitate and support a professional learning community (PLC).

7. Provide your plan to build a seamless transition plan for schools to sustain the practices that support evaluation and implementation of communication systems.
8. Provide confirmation that you are committed to the following:
 - a. Quarterly meeting between the department's principle investigator and the other awarded grantees.
 - b. Monthly collaboration between the other awarded grantees.
 - c. The Partners in Education (PIE) Conference as both a presenter and exhibitor.
 - d. Collaborate with the other state contracts as needed.
9. Provide your plan to identify, order, and maintain the equipment and devices purchased to support students, including supporting students in acquiring personal devices and assistive technology through private insurance and/or Medicaid (TennCare).

Budget (30 Points)

The agency will submit a **five year** budget, using the budget template in Appendix B, along with a budget narrative that covers expenses for the entire grant term.

The grants are administered as **reimbursement grant** contracts, meaning the grantee delivers services and is reimbursed for actual approved expenditures. Agencies should possess the fiscal capacity to manage the cash flow challenges presented by this type of grant process. **Grantees are encouraged to maintain two to three calendar months operating capital to provide programming between payment requests. Carry-over funds are not allowed.**

Grantees are expected to follow all guidelines for the administration of federal grant funds. Grantees should refer to the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) ([here](#)) and Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ([here](#)) for guidance. The following sections outline **key things to consider** when preparing the project budget.

- **Supplement/ Supplant**

Funds received under this program may only be used to supplement and not supplant federal, state, and local funds that would otherwise be available and used for program expenditures.

- **Allowable Costs**

When determining if charges are allowed/appropriate for a federal grant, consider if the expenses are:

- Necessary for the performance or administration of the project
- Reasonable
- Allocable to a particular cost objective
- Legal and authorized (or not prohibited) under state or local laws
- Consistent with uniform policies of other federal and non-federal activities
- Consistent with generally accepted accounting principles

- Adequately documented

Examples of allowable and unallowable expenditures can be found in [Appendix C](#).

- **Salaries/Wages**

In the budget narrative, it is important to distinguish which employees will be providing direct services to students and which staff members will be performing administrative tasks.

Administrative tasks may include preparing reports, hiring staff, and managing the project budget. For full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, the applicant should explain the process for determining what percentage of the employee's time will be spent on grant activities. The applicant should clearly describe how all staff including agency administrators (if applicable) support the achievement of the project goals. Overtime pay for hourly employees: An allocable portion of overtime pay for eligible participants may be charged to the grant. The applicant should consult with the agency's fiscal director for guidance in this area.

- **Assistive Technology and Augmentative Assistive Communication Devices**

Technology items must be approved by extended learning staff prior to purchase. In the budget narrative, outline which devices will be housed at the lending library.

- **Indirect Costs**

The department will allow state universities, state colleges, private colleges and universities, and non-governmental agencies to charge an indirect cost up to eight percent or the agency's restricted rate approved by the appropriate cognizant agency. If awarded funding, the department will collect from the agency a copy of their current negotiated restricted indirect cost plan that has been approved by the appropriate cognizant agency.

It is expected that if an agency collects indirect costs for the general administration of the grant such as for printing, publications, or payroll services, then the agency will not include separate line items in the budget for these expenses.

Appendix A: Scoring Rubric

Sustainability

The Solicitation Coordinator will calculate the average of the peer review committee scores to calculate the final score for this section.

Sustainability	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes how other grants or funds will be leveraged to sustain the program Describes how partnerships will be utilized to continue the program Describes how current operating funds will be used to support the program <p>Key Component: The sustainability plan is detailed and goes beyond generalities such as applying for additional grants to support the program.</p>		
SCORE (maximum possible score =10)		
<p>Evaluator Identification:</p>		

Technical Response

The Solicitation Coordinator will multiply the Item Score by the associated Evaluation Factor (indicating the relative emphasis of the item in the overall evaluation). The resulting product will be the item's Raw Weighted Score for purposes of calculating the section score as indicated.

Technical Response	Evaluation Factor	Item Score	Raw Weighted Score
1. Provide a narrative that illustrates your understanding of the department's	5		

Technical Response	Evaluation Factor	Item Score	Raw Weighted Score
requirements and project schedule.			
2. Describe how you will complete the scope of services, accomplish required objectives, and meet the department's project schedule.	5		
3. Provide a plan that outlines how you will manage the project, ensure completion of the scope of services, and accomplish required objectives within the department's project schedule.	10		
4. Outline your expertise and prior experience training and supporting student communication acquisition.	15		
5. Provide your plan to create a supportive and collaborative relationship with educators, schools, and districts as well as parents and paraprofessionals.	20		
6. Describe your ability to facilitate and support a professional learning community (PLC).	10		
7. Provide your plan to build a seamless transition plan for schools to sustain the practices that support evaluation and implementation of communication systems.	15		

Technical Response	Evaluation Factor	Item Score	Raw Weighted Score
8. Provide confirmation that you are committed to the following: a. Quarterly meeting between the department's principle investigator and the other awarded grantees. b. Monthly collaboration between the other awarded grantees. c. The Partners in Education (PIE) Conference as both a presenter and exhibitor. d. Collaborate with the other state contracts as needed.	5		
9. Provide your plan to identify, order, and maintain the equipment and devices purchased to support students, including supporting students in acquiring personal devices and assistive technology through private insurance and/or Medicaid (TennCare).	5		
Total Weighted Score			
Score (maximum possible = 60)			
Evaluator Identification:			

Budget

The Solicitation Coordinator will calculate the average of the peer review committee scores to calculate the final score for this section.

Budget	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>The applicant:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provides a project timeline for key activities that includes dates and parties responsible. 2. Distinguishes between staff members who will provide direct services to students and those who will function in an administrative capacity. 3. Describes how each staff member or administrative position that will be paid with grant funds supports the achievement of the project goals. 4. Provides a detailed description including calculations in the budget narrative for each line item amount. 		
SCORE (maximum possible score =30)		
<p>Evaluator Identification:</p>		

Appendix B: Budget Template

Submit a separate grant budget for each year.

GRANT BUDGET				
Additional Identification Information As Necessary				
The grant budget line-item amounts below shall be applicable only to expense incurred during the following				
Applicable Period:				
POLICY 03	EXPENSE OBJECT LINE-ITEM	GRANT	GRANTEE	TOTAL
Object	CATEGORY ¹	CONTRACT	PARTICIPATION	PROJECT
Line-item				
Reference				
1. 2	Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	0.00	0.00	0.00
4, 15	Professional Fee, Grant & Award ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	0.00	0.00	0.00
11. 12	Travel, Conferences & Meetings	0.00	0.00	0.00
13	Interest ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
14	Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00
16	Specific Assistance To Individuals	0.00	0.00	0.00
17	Depreciation ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
18	Other Non-Personnel ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
20	Capital Purchase ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
22	Indirect Cost	0.00	0.00	0.00
24	In-Kind Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
25	GRAND TOTAL	0.00	0.00	0.00

¹ Each expense object line-item shall be defined by the Department of Finance and Administration Policy 03, *Uniform Reporting Requirements and Cost Allocation Plans for Subrecipients of Federal and State Grant Monies*, Appendix A. (posted on the Internet at: <http://www.tn.gov/finance/topic/fa-policyinfo>).

² Applicable detail follows this page if line-item is funded.

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

PROFESSIONAL FEE, GRANT & AWARD	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

INTEREST	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

DEPRECIATION	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

CAPITAL PURCHASE	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

Appendix C: Allowable Costs

Expenditures must follow the basic guidelines listed above and must be clearly tied to goals and objectives of the project or program.

Generally **allowable expenses** include:

- Salaries for program personnel including the project director
- Supplies and materials required for the program
- Travel to required meetings and conferences
- AT-AAC Devices

Some examples of **non-allowable expenditures** are:

- Agency level expenses, not directly or clearly related to program
- Grant writing services or fees to prepare the application
- Bonuses or incentives for personnel including cash or material items
- Entertainment (e.g., amusement, diversion, social activities)
- Interest or late payment fees on credit cards
- Purchases of facilities or vehicles
- Capital improvements (e.g., permanent buildings, fixtures, or renovations)
- Lobbying
- Travel expenses for individuals not involved with the program
- Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (e.g., tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities)
- Supplanting federal, state, or local funds

This is not an all-inclusive list of allowable and non-allowable expenses. Grantees are expected to follow all guidelines for the administration of federal grant funds. Grantees should refer to the Education Department General Administrative Regulations ([here](#)) and Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards ([here](#)) for guidance.